

## After "Waste Watchdog" Tip, Braley Questions FEMA Use of Out-of-State Contractors for Flood Recovery

Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) sent a letter to the FEMA administrator to follow-up on a tip from Braley's "Waste Watchdog" site.

Washington, DC - Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) today sent a letter to acting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Nancy Ward asking about FEMA's use of non-local contractors for clean-up and rebuilding efforts in the wake of the floods of 2008. The letter came after Braley received a complaint from an anonymous Iowa resident about FEMA's use of out-of-state contractors through the "Waste Watchdog" feature on his website.

"Taxpayers shouldn't have to worry that their taxes are being spent unwisely," Braley said. "While it might not be against federal regulations for FEMA to use out-of-town contractors to help clean-up and rebuild after last summer's floods, wouldn't it be a smarter use of taxpayer money if those dollars stayed in the local communities that were impacted by the flooding? The government should think outside the box to help the economies of disaster-ravaged communities recover.

Braley's "Waste Watchdog" program allows Iowans to report instances of waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars via his official website, <http://braley.house.gov/>. The allegations of misused tax dollars are then investigated and, if warranted, referred to agencies' investigative agencies or the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

In the letter, Braley writes, "I would be interested to know what steps FEMA takes when entering an area affected by a natural disaster to ensure that local businesses capable of performing necessary services for FEMA receive the contracts for these services. Additionally, were these types of efforts made in response to the Iowa tornado and flooding disasters of 2008? If rules favoring local businesses in a disaster area are not in place, I strongly urge you to consider implementing these regulations that would support the local communities you assist in their time of greatest need."

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April 21, 2009

Nancy Ward

Acting Administrator

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

500 C Street SW

Washington, DC 20472

Dear Acting Administrator Ward,

As part of President Obama's calls for greater oversight and reducing government waste, I have reached out to my constituents and encouraged them to contact me with instances where they feel that the government is spending wastefully or where funds are being improperly spent. Through this Waste Watchdog program, I've heard from a number of Iowans with concerns over government waste, fraud and abuse.

Recently, I received a complaint from an Iowa resident over the use of non-local contractors by FEMA for clean up and rebuilding efforts in Iowa following the flooding. I share their concern that FEMA is contracting work that could be done by local businesses, which would then further stimulate the economies of these flood-ravaged communities. While I understand that FEMA contracting regulations accept bids for projects and usually assign contracts to the lowest bidder, I believe that areas devastated by natural disasters could benefit from contracts going to local contractors who are able to complete the work. These contracts would have the added benefit of providing an economic stimulus and morale boost to companies and citizens that have already been hit hard by the disaster.

I would like to know what steps FEMA takes when entering an area affected by a natural disaster to ensure that local businesses capable of performing necessary services for FEMA receive the contracts for these services. Additionally, were these types of efforts made in response to the Iowa tornado and flooding disasters of 2008? If rules favoring local businesses in a disaster area are not in place, I strongly urge you to consider implementing these regulations that would support the local communities you assist in their time of greatest need.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you in the next 10 business days.

Sincerely,

/s/Bruce Braley

Member of Congress